

**FREE FISHING WEEKEND.** Michigan is offering a Free Fishing Weekend at various locations around the state when all fishing license fees will be waived for residents and out-state visitors alike on both inland and Great Lakes waters. All fishing regulations still apply.

**Local events include:**

Van Buren County. Wolf Lake State Fish Hatchery – Mattawan, MI  
June 9, 10:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Catch and release fishing for youth ages 5 to 16. Pre-registration is required. Equipment and bait will be provided. Hatchery tours also will be available.

Allegan County. Lake Allegan Echo Point Access Site  
June 9, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

No pre-registration. Free carp derby for all ages. Please bring your own fishing pole, tackle and bait. Spear and bow anglers also are invited. Prizes will be awarded and educational materials will be available.

**COUNTY FAIR CALENDAR.**

Van Buren Youth Fair  
July 16–21  
269) 621-2038

Cass County Fair Association  
July 30 – August 4  
269) 445-8265

Berrien County Youth Fair Association  
August 13–18  
269) 473-4251

**ELINEK SUPPORTS BAN ON PHOSPHORUS.** Legislation to ban the sale of household dishwasher or washing machine detergents containing phosphorus in excess of 0.5 percent has passed the Senate. An overabundance of phosphorus encourages the excessive growth of algae and other plant species in water. If the amount of phosphorus is reduced, it could help improve water quality in the long term. Senate Bills 152 and 362 await action in the House.

**BILLBOARDS LIMITED UNDER NEW STATE LAW.** From the Lake Superior lakeshore to the rolling hills of southeast Michigan, our state boasts postcard-pretty scenery. A new law will help preserve the view from Michigan's highways. It prohibits the Michigan Department of Transportation from issuing any new billboard permits. Among other provisions, it gives companies with an outstanding permit one year to either construct the billboard or turn in the permit. By capping the number of billboards, the new law helps preserve our state's scenic beauty for future generations.



# CAPITOL News

FOR THE PEOPLE OF THE 21ST MICHIGAN SENATE DISTRICT

MAY 2007

**ADVOCATE OF THE YEAR.** Sen. Ron Jelinek was honored in April as the "2007 Community Economic Development Advocate of the Year" by the Community Economic Development Association of Michigan. Sen. Jelinek was acknowledged for his work helping secure property tax relief for non-profit organizations engaged in affordable housing development. Senate Bill 65, which he sponsored and ushered through the legislative process, alleviates the tax burden for eligible non-profit housing properties. CEDAM presented the award to Sen. Jelinek during the ninth annual Michigan Conference on Affordable Housing at the Lansing Center.

**SENATOR APPOINTED TO NATIONAL COMMITTEE.** The Council of State Governments has appointed Sen. Ron Jelinek to the Midwestern Radioactive Materials Transportation Committee. The committee is charged with identifying and resolving regional issues related to shipments of radioactive materials from 23 Midwestern nuclear power plants. The goal is to ensure shipments of the highly radioactive waste are conducted in a safe and secure manner while adhering to all state and federal requirements and best practices. The committee is comprised of 24 members (legislators and agency officials) representing the following 12 Midwestern states: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nevada, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Wisconsin.



STATE SENATOR

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**FOOD BANK DONATION TAX CREDIT PROPOSED.** To help stimulate donations to food banks across the state, legislation has been introduced that would grant tax credits to individuals making food donations. Under current law, taxpayers may receive a credit for cash contributions made to homeless shelters, food kitchens or food banks, but donations of food items are currently not tax deductible. Senate Bill 150 expands the credit to include the value of food items donated to these organizations.

**ANTI-EMBEZZLEMENT BILL INTRODUCED.** Legislation to protect Michigan taxpayers and county commissions from embezzlement by county officials was introduced in the state Senate. Senate Bill 368 would require the notarized signature of the county treasurer and either the chairman of the county commission, county clerk, or county controller on county transfer authorizations of more than \$10,000.

**SENATE PASSES BILL PACKAGE REGULATING “ROBO-CALLS”.** The Senate recently passed a legislative package that would subject automated political telephone calls, or robo-calls, to the same regulation as other forms of paid political communication. The bills would require the disclosure of who paid for a robo-call and whether the call was authorized by a candidate and would apply identifying-statement requirements to all printed, radio and television ads.

Automated telephone calls related to candidates, elections and ballot questions were used extensively during the last election cycle. Use of robo-calls has increased because they are an inexpensive method of encouraging residents to vote for or against a candidate or issue. The legislation is intended to restore integrity to the electoral process. Requiring individuals and groups sponsoring these calls to identify themselves will enable voters to make informed decisions about the messages they are hearing.

**LEGISLATION INTRODUCED TO PROTECT CONSUMERS PURCHASING GIFT CARDS.** Legislation introduced recently in the Michigan Senate will limit the restrictions that retailers can place on gift cards. Under current law, gift cards are treated as cash, but some retailers have restricted the buying power of the cards by imposing fees or expiration dates on the cards. Senate Bill 387 prevents a company from charging an inactivity fee on a gift card and from imposing an expiration date for five years. Senate Bill 388 reinforces an attorney general opinion that any remaining balance on the card after five years reverts back to the state's unclaimed property division.

**LEGISLATION TO ESTABLISH GREAT LAKES STATE PARK INTRODUCED.** A package of bills that would name Michigan's Great Lakes bottomlands the Great Lakes State Park was recently introduced. The legislation would designate all the Great Lakes bottomlands within Michigan boundaries as state park lands, forming Michigan's largest state park. The goal is to preserve and protect Michigan's waterways and enhance recreational opportunities such as boating, fishing and scuba diving. The six-bill package would create a preservation fund to invest and help with the park's management and administration. Money

collected from a voluntary donation of \$15 for a proposed Great Lakes State Park Pass also would be credited to the fund. The bills also would establish a broad-based Great Lakes State Park and Salvage Advisory Committee to develop guidelines for shipwreck discovery and criteria for permits and passes for underwater archaeological recovery and salvage.

**LARGE ANIMAL FEEDING OPERATIONS POLLUTION CONTROL BILLS INTRODUCED.** Two bills were recently introduced to strengthen laws governing large concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) that violate state environmental regulations. Under the legislation, convicted violators of environmental laws would not be allowed to expand their operations until they are in compliance with all applicable laws and rules. The operators would have to provide a mechanism of financial assurance, such as an insurance policy or letter of credit, to cover the cost of future cleanup should additional problems occur.

If the Michigan Department of Agriculture determines new CAFOs and farms are not in conformance with Generally Accepted Agricultural Management Practices for Site Selection and Odor Control they also would have to provide this financial assurance. The bills allow a court to revoke the permits of large CAFOs that do not comply with applicable laws and regulations. Revoked permits would not be reissued until the operations comply with applicable laws and regulations and court requirements for remediation.

**LOCAL RELAY FOR LIFE EVENTS UNDERWAY.** Relay for Life is a fun-filled overnight event designed to bring together those in the community who have been touched by cancer. The event celebrates survivorship and money is raised to help save lives, help those who have been touched by cancer, and empower individuals to fight back. During Relay for Life, teams of people gather at schools, fairgrounds, or parks and take turns walking for 24 hours as a reminder that cancer never sleeps.

Please join the community at the following local Relay for Life events:

- Relay for Life of Van Buren West  
June 9-10, 10 a.m. – 10 a.m.  
Bangor High School track
- Relay for Life of Niles/Buchanan  
June 14-15, 10 a.m. – 10 a.m.  
Niles High School
- Relay for Life of Berrien County  
June 23-24, 8 a.m. – 8 a.m.  
Berrien County Fairgrounds